



November 26, 2019

The Honorable Marsha Blackburn
United States Senate
357 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Blackburn,

Please accept this response to your November 5, 2019 letter to TikTok Inc. regarding your concerns about children's privacy on the TikTok platform. TikTok is firmly committed to safeguarding the data of its users, especially our younger users.

Below is an overview of our company's current policies and positions relating to data privacy and children's use of the TikTok platform. We are working to continually update and reinforce our efforts. We welcome your interest and look forward to working with you on this critical issue.

Our Company

TikTok's mission is to inspire creativity and bring joy. TikTok provides users with the ability to create, share, and discover entertaining short-form videos that are primarily comedy, memes, dance, animals, travel, and lip-sync.

The TikTok mobile application (the "app") is distributed by TikTok Inc., a U.S. company that is a part of ByteDance Ltd., a global company that originated in Beijing, China, and is incorporated outside of China. ByteDance is a privately-owned, VC-backed tech company that offers a portfolio of applications in more than 150 countries. Most of ByteDance's investors are global institutional investors such as KKR, Sequoia, Softbank, Coatue, Fidelity, Goldman Sachs, and New Enterprise Associates.

Our Commitment to Getting Our Policies Right

TikTok is committed to working to provide a safe and expressive app experience for our community, and we aim to be a leader in this area. We recognize, however, that technology is ever-evolving, leading to emerging and sometimes unexpected trends and challenges.

To that end, and in light of the breadth and complexity of challenges facing digital platforms, TikTok recently announced a new initiative in collaboration with the global law firm K&L Gates LLP, including former Congressmen Bart Gordon and Jeff Denham, to further strengthen the company's teams,

moderation policies, and overall transparency.¹ That effort includes the creation of a committee of outside experts to advise and review content moderation policies on a wide range of topics, including cyberbullying and misinformation. In addition, TikTok is committed to increasing the transparency of our policies and practices, as well as building our internal leadership and moderation capacity. These steps will help ensure that TikTok is well prepared to serve our community and users of all ages effectively and responsibly.

TikTok also recently announced a partnership with the Family Online Safety Institute (“FOSI”), an international, non-profit organization dedicated to making the online world safer for children and their families.² FOSI convenes leaders in industry, government, and non-profit sectors to collaborate and innovate new solutions and policies in the field of online safety. Through this partnership, TikTok and FOSI have launched an interactive tool where parents can download a guide for TikTok Parental Controls.³

Our Priority to Create a Safe Community for our Users

TikTok prioritizes creating a safe experience for all of our users, including children. The daily active user percentage of users identified as under 18 years old by the app’s age gate is 25 percent. Twenty-three percent of the in-app revenue is derived from these users.

As we continue to develop the global TikTok platform, we have been creating measures to further protect our user community — including tools for parents to protect their teens and for users to enable additional privacy settings. TikTok developed an online Safety Center, blog series, and safety videos to educate users about the controls and settings that can help curate their experience. To this end, TikTok has several policies and resources for children under 18 and parents, including:

- Tips for Parents: <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/tiktoks-top-10-tips-for-parents>
- Parental Guide: <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/tiktok-parental-guide>
- Safety Videos: <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/youre-in-control-video-series-stars-tiktok-creators-to-educate-users-about-safety-features>; <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/tiktoks-new-user-safety-videos-merge-education-with-entertainment>

These policies and resources enable parents to customize the app experience for their children. Parents can enable device-specific controls, set the app settings to private, limit screen time, restrict messaging, and report violations of guidelines directly to TikTok for review by our U.S. safety team.

Additionally, there is a separate TikTok experience for U.S. users who are under the age of 13. When downloading the app, if a user selects a birthdate indicating that the user is younger than 13 years old, that user will be directed to TikTok’s app experience for younger users where users can view and like videos

¹ See “Our commitment to our users and the TikTok experience” (Oct. 15, 2019), <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/our-commitment-to-our-users-and-the-tik-tok-experience>.

² See “Family Online Safety Institute Welcomes TikTok” (Oct. 17, 2019), <https://www.fosi.org/about/press/fosi-welcomes-tiktok/>.

³ See “TikTok Parental Controls,” <https://www.fosi.org/good-digital-parenting/tiktok-parental-controls/>.

from other creators, but cannot view or post comments on these videos, or view live streams. Users under the age of 13 can shoot their own videos using TikTok's creative filters, and the videos are saved directly to their device — these videos are not saved to TikTok's servers or viewable by other users. They cannot search, exchange messages with other users, or view other users' profiles, and other users cannot view their profiles.

Users make in-app purchases via the Apple App Store or Google Play, which have safeguards in place to prevent unauthorized purchases by minors. In addition, TikTok is in the process of rolling out updated policies relating to livestreaming and in-app purchases by minors. In December, we will be increasing the minimum age of users for certain app activities; when the new policy is in place, users will need to be at least 16 years old to livestream videos and at least 18 years old to purchase, send, or receive virtual gifts.

U.S. Data Privacy and Security

TikTok is aware of several of your colleagues' concerns regarding data privacy and security on our platform. We take these issues incredibly seriously as well. TikTok stores all U.S. user data in the United States, with backup redundancy in Singapore. TikTok's data centers are located outside of China. Further, we have a dedicated technical team focused on adhering to robust cybersecurity policies, data privacy, and security practices.

As you may know, earlier this year, Musical.ly Inc., TikTok's predecessor app, entered into an agreement with the Federal Trade Commission to settle allegations relating to the collection of certain personal information of children. Under the settlement, TikTok is, among other things, required to comply with COPPA going forward and to take offline all videos made by children under the age of 13.

Similar to other companies in our space, TikTok shares certain user information of users 13 and over with authorized third parties such as Zendesk and Survey Monkey to enhance the user experience. User data is provided to third parties for purposes such as log-in, analytics, advertising, app infrastructure, fraud prevention, and customer service. TikTok does not share the user information of users under 13 years old. In addition, TikTok has not shared and will not share U.S. user data, including that of children, with the Chinese government.

Again, these challenges continue to evolve, and through our collaboration with the Gordon-Denham team at K&L Gates, TikTok will continue to seek opportunities to improve our ability to address them. We would welcome opportunities to work with other platforms, industry experts, and your office to jointly address the challenges.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

Vanessa Pappas

DA74A6BABC754A1...

Vanessa Pappas

General Manager, TikTok U.S.